

Hutz La'aretz, "Outside of the Land"

Hypothesizing the Political Psychology of American Jews on Issues of Israel

Research Thesis

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Table of Contents

- I. Abstract
- II. Acknowledgements
- III. Introduction: *Hutz La'aretz*, "Outside of the Land"
 - A. Motivations and Overview
 - B. Terminology
- IV. Literature Review: American Jewish Perspectives on Israel
 - A. American Jewish History
 - B. American Jewish Political History
 - C. Zionism, American Jews, and Assimilation
- V. Model and Data
 - A. A Spectrum of Support for Israel among American Jews
 - B. Characterizing the Camps: Left, Right, and Center
- VI. Hypothesis Generation
 - A. "Splitting the Center"
 - B. Hypotheses Explained
- VII. Hypothesis Testing: Proposals for Other Researchers
 - A. Proposed Research Methods
- VIII. Conclusion
 - A. Implications and Questions for Other Researchers
- IX. Bibliography

I. Abstract

My research explores whether or not American Jewish perspectives on Israeli government policies are changing. I review literature on American Jewish history and political involvement, and I develop a “spectrum” model to locate American Jewish views on Israeli policies over the last decade. I cite opinion poll data and testimonials to hypothesize that American Jewish perspectives on Israeli policies are shifting along the spectrum model. I further hypothesize the conditions under which American Jewish views on Israeli policies shift, and in what direction we can expect views to shift when those conditions are met. I outline methods for testing my hypotheses, and I conclude by analyzing the potential implications of correct hypotheses and by offering additional questions for future researchers.

II. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisors, Prof. Donald Sylvan and Prof. Anthony Mughan, for their guidance on this project. I would also like to thank Mr. Ed Quinn of the Ohio State University Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry, Ms. Jill Klimpel of the Ohio State University Department of Political Science, and Ms. Rebecca Baker of the Ohio State University Department of Economics, for their support.

III. Introduction: *Hutz La'aretz*, “Outside of the Land”

A. *Motivations and Overview*

The Hebrew word *ha'aretz*, literally “the land,” migrated from the Jewish lexicon to Zionist¹ politics in the late 19th century, about sixty years before the founding of the state of Israel. Early Zionist thinkers used *ha'aretz* as a means of describing the “Jewish homeland” central to their ideology. *Ha'aretz* became as a stand-in term for the land that would become the state of Israel, tying biblical prophecies of a Jewish homeland to the physical land of biblical Israel². This usage of *ha'aretz* captured two central components of Zionism: the unity of Israel as physical land, cultural cradle, and sacred site for Jewish people, and the positioning of Israel as the center of the Jewish world.³

The Zionist understanding of Israel – as both unifying and central to Jewish life – and the widespread acceptance of Zionism by Jews around the world, have produced a range of complex political perspectives on Israel within modern American Jewish communities.⁴ Zionism coalesced and gained political traction primarily in response to European anti-Semitism,⁵ a force functionally distinct from American histories of Jewish persecution.⁶ Early Zionists argued forcefully that centuries of Jewish persecution in Christian Europe proved that there was no

¹ See “Zionism” in Section III Part B. Terminology.

² See “Israel/Palestine” in Section III Part B. Terminology.

³ Schlomo 45

⁴ See “Jewish Diaspora” in Section III Part B. Terminology.

⁵ A number of factors birthed the Zionist movement, including European Jewish engagement with the Enlightenment, assimilation dynamics, Biblical, cultural, and historical precedents for an “ingathering of exiles” in Israel, and persecution of Jews in the Diaspora. The argument made here is not intended to negate the existence of other influences, but rather stress the significance of anti-Semitism as an essential rallying cry for the Zionist movement. See Section IV Part C. for a history of Zionism and a discussion of the factors that enabled its successes.

⁶ Cohen 567

possibility of Jewish longevity in the Diaspora, and that the establishment of a Jewish national home was critical to Jewish survival.⁷ Jews in the Diaspora, Zionists believed, awaited either discrimination, persecution, and death, assimilation and cultural death, or both. The belief in the inevitability of Diaspora anti-Semitism generated widespread adoption of an attitude of *shlilat ha'galut*,⁸ or negation of the Diaspora, among Zionists. *Ha'aretz*, the land, entered Zionist rhetoric as a reflection of the movement's fundamental pessimism towards Diaspora Jewishness. Israel was "the land," and the only land. Zionists argued that the establishment of a national homeland there was Jews' only hope for survival. Jews *hutz la'aretz*,⁹ outside of the land, were doomed.¹⁰

The social, economic, and political success of American Jewish communities, coupled with American Jews' failure to emigrate to Israel en masse after its founding in 1948, poses an ideological challenge to Zionism and complicates American Jewish perspectives on Israel and its politics. The American Jewish Diaspora is arguably the most prosperous Jewish community *hutz la'aretz* since the first Israelite kingdom was exiled to Babylon in 598 B.C.E.¹¹ Its continued existence and historically unprecedented prosperity seemingly undermine the Zionist argument for the necessity of a Jewish state and have produced political tension between American Jews and their Israeli counterparts. Some Israeli and American Jews have argued forcefully for strong partnerships between their communities in order to strengthen Israel financially and politically; others have rejected American Jewish interference in Israeli politics, citing the irrelevance of Israel to American Jewish life or the perceived inability or unwillingness of American Jews to

⁷ Diner 7

⁸ See *shlilat ha'galut* in Section III Part B. Terminology.

⁹ See *hutz la'aretz* in Section III Part B. Terminology.

¹⁰ Gartner 264

¹¹ Halperin 90

understand Israeli political nuance. A minority of Jews, Israeli and American, have called on American Jews to denounce Israeli policies and government actions, usually citing these policies' inconsistency with American Jewish political values or Jewish religious teachings.¹²

The final layer of the conflicting ideologies that shape American Jewish perspectives on Israel is the Zionist impact on American Jewish identity. Many Zionists, both within Israel and abroad, export a framework for Jewish identity that centers Israel as essential to Jewish political and/or spiritual existence, and defines Jewish people in terms of their collective "longing to return" to Israel. This framework draws on the influence of *Eretz Yisrael* on centuries of Jewish identity and practice; Jewish daily prayers, sometimes recited while facing Jerusalem, refer to "your people Israel," "your return to Jerusalem," and, on some holy days, conclude with cries of "Next year in Jerusalem!" Jewish religious texts, laws, and customs associate *aliyah*, or Jewish immigration to Israel, with salvation, and some rabbis contend that "return" to Israel is a religious obligation for Jewish people. Prior to the emergence of Zionist movement, most Diaspora Jews understood religious reverence of *Eretz Yisrael* as spiritual, not temporal. The commandment to "return" was usually interpreted as a call to a spiritual homecoming during a future messianic age, not a literal imperative to immigrate. While some Jews did engage literally with *aliyah* and immigrated to Israel prior to the birth of Zionism, most did not associate the teachings and customs of Jewish practice with the political goals of the Zionist movement prior to its emergence in the late nineteenth century.¹³

Zionists' assertion of Jewish identity as a European-style nationality have relied on Jewish histories, traditions, and practices that tie Jewish people to Israel. According to Zionist

¹² Kimmerling 3

¹³ Lipka 4

ideology, Jewish identity, through its traditional roots in shared history, culture, and practice, is inherently linked to Israel.¹⁴ This articulation of Jewish identity has sometimes been interpreted as a radical departure from how American Jews understand themselves. In 1885, for example, the American Reform Movement issued the Pittsburgh Platform rejecting Zionism on the grounds that it was irrelevant to American Jewish identity: "We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state."

After the Holocaust, many American Jews grew more sympathetic to Zionism. Most communities tried to mitigate the tension produced by the embrace of Zionist Jewish identity in the Diaspora by supporting Israel politically and financially, even while refusing, for the most part, to make *aliyah*. Political engagement with Israel became a means of reconciling the tension produced by embracing Diaspora Jewishness in a Jewish world saturated with the success of the Zionist movement.¹⁵ Even American Jews who celebrate life in the Diaspora are more likely to hold political views on Israel than are their non-Jewish counterparts. As with all groups of Americans, not all American Jews engage with politics of any kind. However, for those who do, Israel is almost always a key issue.¹⁶

This thesis aims to understand American Jewish perspectives on Israeli policies and government actions and generate hypotheses to test whether or not those perspectives have shifted between 2007 and 2017. Critically, I do not empirically test claims. Instead, I offer historical context to understand American Jewish political psychology, develop a data-driven

¹⁴ Kimmerling 16

¹⁵ Diner 89

¹⁶ Liu 8

model to locate American Jewish political views on Israel over the last ten years, hypothesize that American Jewish political perspectives have shifted during that time period, and provide strategies that other researchers should use to test these hypotheses.

B. Terminology

Throughout this thesis, I will use terms with ambiguous or contested definitions. To provide clarity to the reader, I have provided working definitions, along with background on how I developed these definitions, below.

I. “Jew”

I utilize the same definition of “Jew” that nearly all demographic surveys use. Jews are people who identify as Jewish culturally, ethnically, religiously, or some combination of the three.

Orthodox rulings on who “counts” as Jewish are traditionally made by religious authorities and only recognize: A) Children born to ethnically Jewish mothers; B) Religious converts.

Functional definitions for non-Orthodox Jews, however, allow for a much broader interpretation of Jewishness, one that recognizes the spectrum of observance (or lack thereof) and cultural and ethnic diversity within Jewish communities. For the purpose of this paper, I shall recognize as Jewish any individual who sees him/herself as Jewish culturally, ethnically, and/or religiously.¹⁷

I will develop in later sections that first-person perspective on Jewish identity - i.e. seeing oneself as Jewish or not - is a key determinant of engagement in Jewish communities and political activism regarding Israel.

II. “*Eretz Yisrael*” vs. Israel:

¹⁷ Liu 8

Characterizing the historical relationship between modern Jews and Israel presents political as well as linguistic challenges. That modern Jews have long-established cultural and religious ties to the “land” that is the modern state of Israel is certainly substantiated by historical and sociological data, as I will establish in later sections. However, because such claims are sometimes weaponized to deny other groups claim to that same land, despite historical and sociological data in support of those claims, it is critical to be precise and intentional in describing this relationship. I will therefore draw a distinction between the Jewish relationship with Eretz Yisrael, the religious, mythical, and cultural understanding of “The Land of Israel,” and the political relationship between Jews and the modern state of Israel that is (sometimes) influenced by Jewish conceptions of Eretz Yisrael.

Modern Diaspora Jews have traditionally understood themselves as descendants of ancient Jews, some of whom once concentrated in Palestine. Palestine holds religious significance for Jews, both as the home of Jewish holy sites and as the region traditionally associated with the biblical “Promised Land.”¹⁸

III. Diaspora

The Jewish Diaspora encapsulates Jews outside of what is now the modern state of Israel and the Palestinian territories, and includes American Jews.¹⁹

IV. Israel/Palestine

Israel refers to the modern state of Israel, unless otherwise specified. Palestine refers to the Palestinian territories.²⁰

V. Zionism

¹⁸ Cohen 34

¹⁹ Kimmerling 102

²⁰ Laqueur 3

Zionism is the political movement for a Jewish homeland.

VI. *Shilat Ha'gulat*

Life in the Diaspora would either lead to discrimination and persecution or to national decadence and [assimilation](#). A more moderate formulation says that the Jews as a people have no future without a "spiritual center" in the Land of Israel.²¹

IV. Literature Review: American Jewish Perspectives on Israel [NEEDS CITATION OVERHAUL]

A. *American Jewish History*

I. Immigration

The first Jewish immigrants landed in what is now the United States in the mid-17th century. They were mostly Western Sephardic Jews from Spain and Portugal. The first Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants arrived in 1720, coming from Central and Eastern Europe, and quickly swallowed the smaller Sephardic communities. However, Sephardic Jews became active in American colonial politics, especially after earning political rights in colonies with heavy Jewish populations in the late 18th century.²²

American Jewish communities remained small until large-scale immigration from Central Europe in the mid-19th century. Ashkenazi Jews fleeing anti-Semitic persecution in Europe settled in the United States as merchants and shop owners. The American Jewish community by the late 19th century was about 250,000 strong, educated, secular, and largely German. Its demographic shifted at the turn of century with a heavy influx of Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Ashkenazi immigrants, seeking refuge from anti-Jewish persecution and economic turmoil at in rural parts of the Russian Empire and what is now Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania,

²¹ Diner 7

²² Cohen 56

Moldova, and Belarus. Urban Ashkenazi Jews from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, driven out of their home countries by economic difficulties, arrived in the US in droves. Between 1880 and the enforcement of Immigration Act of 1924, over 2,000,000 Jews landed in the United States. The majority settled in New York City, establishing the city as one of the most significant centers of Jewish life and culture in the world. In 1915, 500,000 Yiddish newspapers circulated the New York metropolitan area alone, with 600,000 additional subscriptions nationally. New Jewish immigrants established New York as a hub of language, culture, and Jewish religious practice, a tradition that continues today.²³

II. Assimilation

Early 20th century Jewish immigrants structured communities around small synagogues and cultural centers with Jews with roots in the same regions, cities, or villages in Europe or the Middle East/North Africa. While much of Jewish life in late 19th century Europe had been characterized by its insulation from the outside world, many American Jews pushed their communities to assimilate into American life. American Jewish writers and artists played a role in shaping 20th century American culture, inserting the wry pessimism and ironic wit of Ashkenazi village culture into the American mainstream.²⁴ Half of all Jewish men between 18 and 50 served in World War II, and many Jewish families joined the post-war suburbanization of the white American mainstream. Suburban Jews saw intermarriage rates rise, a traditional hallmark of assimilation, but the shift from cities to suburbs also saw a reimagining of Jewish cultural life. A newly monied generation of American Jews built Jewish community centers and schools, where enrollment more than doubled between 1945 and 1955. Synagogue affiliation,

²³ Liebman 43

²⁴ Safran 34

especially in Reform and Conservative synagogues, saw a 40% increase between 1930 and 1960, reflecting both a post-Holocaust anxiety over loss of Jewish religion and culture and a shift away from urban secularism towards religiously affiliated suburb culture.²⁵

Perhaps the most visible hallmark of American Jewish assimilation is the community's unbridled success across professional fields within the span of a few decades. Prior to World War I, American Jews were largely a lower-class, new immigrant minority group barred from most fields beyond manual labor. 80% of all employed American Jews were factory workers in the early 20th century. Today, American Jews consistently rank as the wealthiest or second wealthiest ethnic group in the US in terms of average annual salary, and have enjoyed this position for the last forty years. American Jews are highly concentrated in fields considered prestigious in American culture, such as academic, law, and medicine, and earn around double the average per capita income of the average non-Jewish American.²⁶

B. American Jewish Political History

I. Organizing History

While early Sephardic Jewish immigrants were actively involved in colonial politics, later immigrants struggled to find a political niche in a crowded Democratic Party. As floods of German and later Eastern European Jewish immigrants arrived during the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, American Jews initially struggled to gain a political foothold. New York City became the site of most American Jewish political activity during this time period. While more established uptown German Jewish communities could sometimes sway political actors, the swaths of newer Eastern European immigrants clashed with their downtown Irish and German

²⁵ Sarna 378

²⁶ Diner 90

Catholic neighbors. Irish Catholics largely controlled the Democratic Party in the early 20th century, especially in New York, and American Jews initially struggled to organize politically with them. A turning point came for American Jewish politics when Eastern European Jews leveraged their heavy concentration in the garment industry into union organizing. They had grown into a powerful political force by the 1930s, and American Jewish political influence began to spread to other communities throughout the country. American Jews were part of the New Deal Coalition and were strong supporters of social and economic justice programs of the early and mid-20th century.²⁷ Jews formed allegiances with other maligned immigrant and ethnic groups and often organized along shared experiences of class and/or ethnic marginalization. By mid-century, however, with the post-war shift from Jewish communities from cities to suburbs, greater acceptance from American institutions, rise of the Black Panther movement in the mid-1960s²⁸, American Jews began to see themselves as more aligned with the American mainstream. This shift in mindset allowed more Jews to enter conservative politics; however the overwhelming majority of American Jews remain solidly Democratic and strongly identify as Jewish, despite assimilation.²⁹

II. Ideological Roots

The first wave of Ashkenazic immigrants from Germany tended to view themselves as politically conservative, but subsequent waves of Eastern European immigrants were staunchly left-wing. Eastern European Jewish immigrants came from socialist and Bundist labor

²⁷ Safran 70

²⁸ Although there was strong American Jewish support for the Civil Rights movement, the Black Panther movement of the mid-1960s caused a schism between African American organizers and Jewish organizers, who had formally allied on many political issues. Both groups remained (and still remain) solidly Democratic, however.

²⁹ Diner 101

movements in Europe, and their experiences motivated the American Jewish political emphasis on union organizing in the early 20th century. With the dawn of the New Deal after the Great Depression, American Jewish political leaders joined the ranks of Democratic Party leadership, bringing with them socialist-influenced political ideology. The political success of Eastern European Jewish labor leaders has strongly influenced American Jewish politics.³⁰ Prior to their success, in the second half of the 19th century, American Jews tended to vote Republican. After the election of Democrat Woodrow Wilson in 1916, however, in which 55% American Jews cast votes for the Democratic candidate, the majority American Jews have voted Democratic. 90% of American Jews voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1940 and 1944, and 75% voted for Harry Truman (15% split to support the Progressive Party). The block voting patterns of American Jews captured Democratic and Republican attention alike after 1944, and both parties made subsequent plays for the American Jewish vote by including Zionism in their platforms. The inclusion of Zionism in both party platforms seemed to have little effect on Jewish voting patterns, however, with 90% of Jews casting ballots for non-Republicans in 1948. Every Democratic presidential candidate has enjoyed at least 67% of the Jewish vote since then, except for Jimmy Carter, who won 45% of the Jewish vote in 1976.³¹

78% of American Jews cast ballots for Democrat Barack Obama in 2008. Obama earned a greater percentage of the Jewish vote than of white Protestants, white Catholics, and voters stating no religion. Many commentators have wondered what explains American Jews' unyielding support for Democratic candidates over the last century, despite the community's newfound economic success. While other immigrant groups, such as Hispanic Americans and

³⁰ Kimmerling 82

³¹ Diner 134

Arab Americans, tend to become more politically conservative as they become more prosperous, American Jews have remained majority Democratic voters since World War I.³²

C. Zionism, American Jews, and Assimilation

Louis Brandeis and other leaders brought the Zionist project to the US. Zionism was a contentious and even unpopular movement among American Jews prior to the Holocaust, when many rejected it as unnecessary and even radical. After the Holocaust, however, American Jews largely converted to the Zionist movement. The founding of the state of Israel in 1948 and subsequent American media frenzy brought Israel to the forefront of the American Jewish political consciousness, where it remains today.³³

The Six-Day War was a turning point in the American Zionist movement. Some American Jews disagreed with Israel's response, which they decried as too anti-Palestinian and even too anti-Soviet. However, eventually the majority Jewish opinion - that the war had been necessary - won out, signifying the dawning of an era of relatively unanimous support for Israel among American Jews.³⁴ There were similar almost-schisms around the election of Menachem Begin, the 1982 Lebanon War, the Oslo Accords, and the continuing occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.³⁵

During the 1990s, American Jews began to lobby separately for their increasingly disparate positions on Israel.³⁶ Americans for Peace Now and the Israel Policy Forum were the

³² Liu 7

³³ Liebman 78

³⁴ Halperin 232

³⁵ Halperin 12

³⁶ Diner 232

“left” Jewish response to the Oslo Accords.³⁷ The Zionist Organization of America and Americans for a Safe Israel were the “right” Jewish response.

V. Model and Data

I collected data on American Jewish perspectives on Israeli policies and government actions between 2007 and 2017. I focused on Israeli policies and government actions regarding Palestinians in Israel and the Palestinian territories, and on Israeli policies and government actions regarding issues of social inequality and/or Jewish identity. I chose these focuses because of their feasibility given the available data.

I observed the following trends:

1. There are few instances of consensus within the American Jewish community. Instead, I observed that most issues produced two or more competing perspectives that were able to receive popular support.³⁸
2. Perspectives tended to fall along American political ideological lines. Most issues produced between two and four general responses, and responses tended to derive from American “left” or “center/far-left” ideology, American “centrist” or “moderate” ideology, and American “right” or “center/far-right” ideology.

A. A Spectrum of Support for Israel Among American Jews

“Left”

“Center”

“Right”

³⁷ Lipka 239

³⁸ “Popular support” indicates that enough American Jews shared a perspective or some recognizable version of it for that perspective to emerge consistently in polling data and/or other opinion trackers, such as news sites and activist movements.

In order to understand whether or not American Jewish perspective on Israeli policies and government actions over the last decade are changing, we must first locate and organize American Jewish perspectives over that time period. To achieve this goal, I developed a linear “spectrum” model of political opinion. The political spectrum model is frequently utilized by Western political scientists, and consists of one or more axes used to depict separate political dimensions. The model typically contains a left wing and a right wing, wherein communist and socialist positions are internationally considered left, and capitalist and conservative positions are internationally considered right. American political spectra typically place social liberalism and the positions of the Democratic Party on the left wing because of the structure of American “Left,” even though in many countries, these positions would be considered part of the “Right.”³⁹

This purpose of this spectrum model is to locate and organize American Jewish perspectives, not to explain why these perspectives exist or where they come from. Section IV offers context to help the reader understand the history of American Jewish political engagement with Israel, and I provide some additional information in this section to justify my placement of different perspectives in different camps. Camps in this model do not symbolize political parties or organizations that shape and produce political perspectives. Rather, camps should be understood as political locations: groups of ideologically related perspectives held by American Jewish individuals. Individuals, or camp members, “belong” to camps because their perspectives on a set of related issues align with those of the other members of the camp.

One limitation of the single-axis spectrum model is its inability to capture the variation of political views across multiple issues. My framework posits for two spectra models: one

³⁹ Laqueur 15

spectrum model with left, right, and center camps for policies and government actions relating to Palestinians, and a second spectrum model with left, right, and center camps for policies and government actions relating to social equality and Jewish identity. This framework allows for the possibility that an individual may have perspectives on different issues located in different camps. For example, an individual's perspectives could fall into the left camp on the social equality and Jewish identity spectrum and the center camp on the spectrum on Palestinians.

B. Characterizing the Camps: Left, Right, and Center

In developing a political spectrum to understand American Jewish perspectives on Israeli policies and government actions, I organized groups of ideologically similar perspectives into three broad camps. I grouped perspectives not only according to their similarities, but also according to the ways in which American Jews who hold these views articulated them ideologically. For example, I observed that there exists a group of American Jews who share the position that the Israeli government should end settlement expansion in the West Bank. American Jews who hold this view may differ on details and logistics, but they are united by their shared belief that the government should end settlement expansion. Most American Jews who hold this view will articulate that it is a “left” position, a position they hold because of their broader ideology, which they locate as on the left on the American political spectrum and our “American Jewish perspectives on Israel” spectrum.

The terms most broadly used by American Jews to describe these position camps are “left,” “right,” and “center.” I will characterize each camp below.

1. “Left” camp

- a. On Palestinians: The left camp is characterized by its members' criticisms of the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians and by its members' shared belief in the need for Palestinian legal equality.⁴⁰ Some members of this camp disagree on strategies to achieve this goal, but most members of this camp oppose policies that severely restrict Palestinian within the occupied territories, oppose what they perceive as the Israeli government's failure to provide vital resources to vulnerable segments of the Palestinian population, and oppose settlement expansion into the West Bank.⁴¹ Some members of this camp fall towards the far left, supporting the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their ancestral homes in parts of Israel, the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement, and the establishment of a bi-national Palestinian-Israeli state as an ultimate solution to the conflict.⁴² Other members fall closer to the center on the spectrum, arguing that Israel should maintain its Jewish majority and character, but that Palestinians should be able to establish a separate, independent state in the occupied territories.⁴³
- b. On social equality and Jewish identity: Members of the left camp favor policies that promote social equality and oppose policies that they perceive as discriminatory towards women, LGBTQ people, and/or racial and ethnic minorities within Israel. Members of this camp favor policies that

⁴⁰ N, B, T, YU

⁴¹ Br

⁴² Br/Yt

⁴³ Pew 2013

allow for greater social equality in religious life, and policies that reflect their interpretation of Jewish identity. This camp's interpretation of Jewish identity allows people who have converted to Judaism and people both who have at least one Jewish parent and also claim Judaism as their religion to be considered Jewish and granted all rights afforded to Jews in Israel. This interpretation of Jewish identity also holds that all Jews have equal rights within religious life, and would favor the ordination of women rabbis, for example.⁴⁴

2. "Center" camp

- a. On Palestinians: Members of the center camp tend to support controversial anti-terrorism policies that increase surveillance of Palestinian communities, restrict Palestinian movement, and sometimes result in resource shortages in the territories.⁴⁵ Members of this camp tend to oppose settlement expansion in the territories.⁴⁶ They also tend to deny the right of Palestinian refugees to return to parts of Israel and they oppose the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement. Members of this camp tend to support the establishment of a separate Palestinian state in the occupied territories as an ultimate solution to the conflict.⁴⁷
- b. Members of the center camp tend to be interested in finding compromises between left and right camp perspectives on social equality policies. For

⁴⁴ Pew 2016

⁴⁵ Pew 2013

⁴⁶ Pew 2013

⁴⁷ Pew 2013

example, while some right camp members argue that homosexuality should be illegal in Israel, members of the center camp tend to support keeping homosexuality legal, but have opposed policies that would grant gay couples legal protections afforded to heterosexual couples, such as the right to adopt children. They tend to share left camp members' interpretation of Jewish identity.⁴⁸

- c. On social equality and Jewish identity: Members of the center camp are very similar to members of the left camp on social equality and Jewish identity. They also favor policies that promote social equality and oppose policies that they perceive as discriminatory towards women, LGBTQ people, and/or racial and ethnic minorities within Israel.⁴⁹ Like the left camp, members of the center camp favor policies that allow for greater social equality in religious life, and policies that reflect their interpretation of Jewish identity. This camp's interpretation of Jewish identity is the same as the left camp's; it allows people who have converted to Judaism and people both who have at least one Jewish parent and also claim Judaism as their religion to be considered Jewish and granted all rights afforded to Jews in Israel. This interpretation of Jewish identity also holds that all Jews have equal rights within religious life.⁵⁰

3. "Right" camp

⁴⁸ Pew 2013

⁴⁹ Pew 2016

⁵⁰ Pew 2013

- a. Note: Members of the right camp tend to derive from two distinct groups that share common policy goals. These groups are politically right-wing Jews, whose motivation to support conservative policies stems primarily from practical concern for Israel's national security and is not explicitly religiously motivated, and religiously right-wing Jews, whose motivation to support conservative policies stems primarily from their shared belief that the land of Israel was bestowed to the Jewish people by God, and that Jewish people have a religious duty to defend it from non-Jews. Religious right-wing Jews often articulate their policy concerns as national security concerns, but their motivation is distinct from right-wing Jews who are not primarily motivated by their belief in religious Zionism.⁵¹
- b. On Palestinians: Members of the right camp tend to favor policies that increase surveillance of Palestinian communities, increase Israeli military presence in the West Bank and Gaza, and restrict Palestinian mobility.⁵² They deny the right of Palestinian refugees to return to parts of Israel, and they oppose the boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement. Members of the right camp tend to support continued settlement expansion.⁵³
- c. On social equality and Jewish identity: Some members of the right camp who are not motivated by religious Zionism tend to support some policies aimed at increasing social equality within Israel. Some of these members are increasingly supportive of the rights of Jewish women, LGBTQ

⁵¹ Pew 2013

⁵² Pew 2016

⁵³ Pew 2013

people, and racial and ethnic minorities in Israel. Members who support social equality in public life also tend to support social equality within religious life, and they tend to share the left and center camps' interpretation of Jewish identity.⁵⁴ However, other members of the right camp who are not religiously motivated do not support policies aimed social equality within Israel. Similarly, most religious Zionist members of the right camp fiercely oppose most social equality policies. Sometimes, this opposition is justified as adherence to Jewish religious law. They tend to oppose measures aimed at increasing social equality within religious life as well, usually citing adherence to Jewish religious law.⁵⁵ Members of the right camp who oppose social equality measures tend to favor an Orthodox interpretation of Jewish identity. Orthodox interpretations of Jewish identity allow people born to Jewish mothers and people who convert to Judaism under an Orthodox rabbi to be considered Jewish. This interpretation tends to favor social inequality in religious life, and would oppose women rabbis, for example.⁵⁶

VI. Hypothesis Generation

A. *Splitting the Center: Hypotheses*

I have provided historical context to help the reader understand American Jewish perspectives on Israeli policies and government actions, and I have used spectra models to map data on those perspectives into three camps: the left, the center, and the right. I will now argue

⁵⁴ Pew 2016

⁵⁵ Pew 2016

⁵⁶ Pew 2013

that over the last ten years, we have observed movement along the spectra models. I propose the following hypotheses:

1. Between 2007 and 2017, American Jewish perspectives on Israel have shifted along the spectra models (outlined in Section V Part A).
2. American Jews have tended to shift away from the center camps on both the spectra models. Some individuals have moved towards the left camps, and others have moved towards the right camps.
3. Movement occurs along the spectra when we observe one or both of the following:
 - a. Changes in levels of religious observance among American Jews
 - b. The Israeli government issues policies or takes action on issues tied to or associated with American Jewish identity.

B. Hypotheses Explained

There are several reasons to argue that we observed a shift in American Jewish perspectives on Israel over the last ten years. First, poll data on American Jewish opinions on Israeli government action towards Palestinians indicates that American Jews are becoming increasingly polarized on settlement expansion and restrictions of Palestinian movement.⁵⁷ Over the last five years, some former center camp members have become so opposed to settlement expansion and checkpoints that they have shifted away from the center camp towards the left camp on the Palestinians spectrum. Other former center camp members have either become pessimistic about the potential of a two-state solution, increasingly wary of terrorism, or both, and have adopted right-wing rhetoric on how settlement expansion and mobility restriction are

⁵⁷ Pew 2013

essential to Israeli national security.⁵⁸ Testimonials - editorials, news articles, and community statements - reflect this shift as well. We have also observed an increase in American left camp and right camp activism over the last ten years, with the left advocating increasingly for an end to settlement expansion, in particular, and the right advocating that Israel maintain or expand settlements.⁵⁹

We observe similar trends for the social equality and Jewish identity spectrum. Poll data indicates some American Jews more accepting of LGBTQ Jews and racial and ethnic minorities within the Jewish community than ever.⁶⁰ Many former center camp members have adopted much stronger stances on policies for social equality in Israel such that their perspectives now align with those of the left camp.⁶¹ Even right camp members have shifted towards the left on some social equality issues.⁶² We also observe an increased willingness of American Jews to revoke political and financial support from Israel in response to perceived social inequality among Israeli Jews.⁶³

This phenomenon helps explain the third hypothesis, that American Jewish perspectives shift in response to changing levels of American Jewish observance and Israeli government behavior. One of the most common explanations for changing American Jewish perspectives on Israel historically is American Jewish assimilation. As American Jews assimilate, most scholars argue, they will become more indifferent or hostile to Israel and their political perspectives will shift accordingly.⁶⁴ One way to measure American Jewish assimilation is by observing changes

⁵⁸ Pew 2013

⁵⁹ Foreign Policy 1

⁶⁰ Pew 2013

⁶¹ Pew 2013

⁶² Pew 2013

⁶³ Pew 2013

⁶⁴ Pew 2013

in levels of religious observance over time. Over the last ten years, we have observed growth in Modern Orthodox and Reform movements memberships and declining memberships in the Orthodox and Conservative movements. Most Reform Jews fall between the center camp and the left camp or in the left camp on both spectra. Orthodox Jews tend to fall in the right camp on both spectra. Conservative Jews are less consistent, with movement members belonging to all three camps, though tending to congregate on the left of the center camp. Modern Orthodox Jews tend to congregate on the right of center, with some members in the right camp and some in the center camp. These membership trends observed across Jewish movements over the last ten years provide support the claim that American Jewish perspectives are shifting away from the center camps and towards the left and right camps.⁶⁵

Finally, we observe shifts in American political perspectives in response to the behavior of the Israeli government. When the Israeli government has taken stances on issues tied to or associated with American Jewish in-group identity, such as religious pluralism, we observe movement along both spectra.⁶⁶ For example, the government's conservative stances on Jewish religious pluralism and LGBTQ rights over the last two years have caused massive upheaval within the American Jewish community. Some commentators have argued that this pushback has sparked movement towards the left and right camps on both the social equality and Palestinians spectra.⁶⁷ The ongoing occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is starting to spur more movement along the Israel support spectrum. However, for now at least, issues of social equality seem much more likely to spur movement than Israeli policies on Palestinians.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Pew 2016

⁶⁶ Pew 2013

⁶⁷ Pew 2013

⁶⁸ Pew 2016

VII. Hypothesis Testing: Proposals for Other Researchers

A. *Proposed Research Methods*

Future researchers should empirically test this data to determine with greater certainty the validity of these claims. This section will outline methodology other researchers should use to test the hypotheses.

I. Mapping Historical Data

- A. Researchers should conduct a thorough review of all available data on American Jewish perspectives on Israeli policies towards Palestinians and Israeli policies on social equality and Jewish identity prior to 2007.
- B. Researchers should use the models developed in this thesis to map American Jewish perspectives historically, identify trends, and, critically, locate those perspectives in the ten-year period preceding our research focus, 1997-2007.

II. Survey

- A. Researchers should locate a large and diverse sample of American Jews. Ideally, a sample should contain about 3,500 American Jews and should contain proportional numbers of secular and affiliated individuals. The sample should account for age, gender, and regional diversity within American Jewish communities. The survey will collect demographic information from individual respondents.
- B. Surveys should be conducted on landlines and cellphones.

C. Researchers should design and conduct a survey that will allow them to ascertain whether or not American Jewish perspectives on either Israeli policies on Palestinians or Israeli policies on social equality and Jewish identity are changing. To achieve this end, the survey should first ask the respondent to self-identify politically and to describe their political activity and ideology. The survey should then identify several high-profile issues in Israeli politics relevant to Palestinians and social equality/Jewish identity from at least 2007 or earlier. Researchers should ask respondents to recall their perspectives on these issues at the time at which they first became relevant; for example, during their first news cycle. Researchers should then choose several political events since 2007 regarding Israeli policies towards Palestinians and social equality/Jewish identity. For example, perhaps within several weeks of the survey's circulation, Israel ruled to allow gay couples to legally adopt children and, separately, had passed measures to expand settlements in East Jerusalem. The survey should describe events such as these to the respondent and ask for their reaction and what they believe should be done. Researchers should record all responses and, upon the completion of survey circulation, plot responses along the spectra models for each issue type and time period. It might make sense for researchers to use separate models not only for issue type, but also for issues before 2007 and after 2007.

- D. After plotting survey responses, researchers can observe whether or not perspectives have moved along the spectra models.

III. Events Data

- A. An events data catalog should be paired with a survey to determine whether certain political circumstances engender American Jewish public opinion trends. Researchers should use events data to categorize events and their responses to determine whether changes in the nature of political events can account for movement along the spectra of American Jewish political perspectives. To do this, a researcher would have to develop criteria to evaluate and catalog events before 2007 and after 2007. One framework for this criteria could be developing working definitions of “conservative” events and “progressive” events and categorizing issues according to those definitions.
- B. Once a framework is in place, researchers can apply the framework to the events studied in the survey to determine whether or not a relationship exists between event type and response type. Researchers should study whether or not patterns exist, such as an increase in the number of “conservative” events and an increase in a certain response type. An analysis of this data can help determine whether or not changes in political circumstances have a causal effect on American Jewish political perspectives.

IV. Demographic Analysis

- A. Researchers should apply a demographic analysis to determine whether or not demographic changes among American Jewish people have caused changes in their political perspectives. Researchers can group responses by demographic information to determine whether or not patterns exist; for example, perhaps respondents under 30 were more likely to hold perspectives aligned with the left camp than their elders. Researchers can record whether or not patterns exist along demographic lines and use sociological and political science analyses to determine the significance of those patterns. For example, a trend towards the left camp among younger Jews might not necessarily signify a change in American Jewish perspectives broadly, since responses from younger Americans tend to favor progressive policies broadly and since Americans tend to move away from progressive policies towards moderate or conservative policies as they age.
- B. Researchers should conduct a literature review on arguments for assimilation as a causal explanation for alleged changes in American Jewish perspectives on Israel. Researchers should evaluate survey responses, grouped by demographics, according to these arguments to determine whether or not assimilation and/or changes in demographics among American Jews can explain changes in American Jewish perspectives on Israel.

V. Interviews

- A. Researchers should conduct in-depth interviews with a large and diverse sample of American Jews in order to better understand how their political perspectives on Israel form and change. Interviewers should seek out American Jewish thought leaders, such as activists, religious and community shepherds, and commentators, as well as community members. Interviewers should ask interviewees to describe their own political perspectives on Israel, how they formed, and whether or not they believe their perspectives have changed and why. Interviewers should also ask interviewees to describe whether or not they believe perspectives have changed broadly across the community, and under what circumstances.
- B. Researchers should use interview data to supplement arguments made from survey data, demographic analyses, and events data.

VIII. Conclusion

A. Implications and Questions for Future Researchers

This thesis has explored American Jewish political perspectives on Israel. I have hypothesized that American Jewish perspectives on Israeli policies towards Palestinians and Israeli policies on social equality and Jewish identity are changing. I further hypothesized that American Jewish perspectives on Israel are becoming increasingly polarized, and that changes in Israeli politics and changes in American Jewish demographics may explain changes in American Jewish political perspectives.

Due to constraints of time and resources, this thesis left many questions unanswered. Although I supported my hypotheses with available data and historical context, I could not

empirically test their validity. I encourage other researchers to use the methodology outlined in Section VII to analyze my hypotheses. Furthermore, I did not explain why the only political opinion data collected on American Jews was on issues regarding Palestinians and issues regarding social equality and Jewish identity. I would encourage future researchers to try to explain why these issues, and not economic inequality, or environmental issues, for example, are particularly salient. Significantly, I also did not explain why or how American Jewish perspectives on Israel are materially relevant. American Jewish perspectives on Israel are certainly presumed by politicians, commentators, and Americans, Israelis, and Palestinians alike to have political significance in Israel. I would encourage future researchers to analyze the validity of this presumption.

If these hypotheses are correct, we have a host of new questions to answer beyond the ones enumerated above. If American Jewish demographics have changed, what are the implications for American and Israeli politics and cultural life? If Israeli politics have changed, what are the implications for the Israeli Palestinians conflict, the relationship between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora, and American involvement in the Middle East? Understanding the political psychology of American Jewish communities, and how it forms and shifts, can teach us something valuable about a number heavyweight political issues in the US and Israel alike. It seems that the views of Jews *hutz la'aertz*, outside the land, still hold weight on issues of Israel, sixty-nine years after the founding of the Jewish state.

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